WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a networked computing environment including a first computer system and a second computer system, a method of granting access to a piece of content on the first computer system, the method including:

  sending a request from the first computer system to the second computer system, the request seeking permission to access the content;

  initiating execution of an acknowledgment-monitoring process at the first computer system, the acknowledgment-monitoring process being operable to:

    (a) detect a second acknowledgment from the second computer system, the second acknowledgment indicating that the second computer system received a first acknowledgment from the first computer system; and

    (b) send a third acknowledgment to the second computer system if the second acknowledgment is not received by the first computer system within a predefined time period;

  receiving the request at the second computer system;

  determining whether to grant the request;

  sending a status indicator from the second computer system to the first computer system, the status indicator including an indication that the request has been granted;

  receiving the status indicator at the first computer system and releasing the content to a user;

sending the first acknowledgment from the first computer system to the second computer system, the first acknowledgment indicating that the content was successfully released to the user;

receiving the first acknowledgment at the second computer system;

sending the second acknowledgment from the second computer system to the first computer system;

receiving the second acknowledgment at the first computer system;

terminating execution of the acknowledgment-monitoring process.

2. A method as in claim 1, in which the status indicator further includes a first time value, and in which the first time value is used, at least in part, to measure the predefined time period.

3. A method as in claim 1, in which the predefined time period is measured from the initiation of execution of the acknowledgment-monitoring process.

4. A method for managing a transaction between a first computer system and a second computer system, the method including:

initiating communication between the first computer system and the second computer system, the communication including a request from the first computer system to the second computer system for authorization to execute the transaction;

initiating a failure-recovery job at the first computer system, the failure-recovery job being operable to automatically send a status signal to the second computer system if the communication between the first computer system and the second computer system exhibits a predefined fault condition;

receiving a signal from the second computer system;

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using the signal to modify a definition of the predefined fault condition.

5.   A method as in claim 4, in which the predefined fault condition comprises the first computer system failing to receive within a predefined amount of time a response from the second computer system to a signal from the first computer system.

6.   A method as in claim 4, in which the failure-recovery job is further operable to send a second status signal to the second computer system if the communication between the first computer system and the second computer system exhibits a second predefined fault condition.

7.   A method as in claim 6, in which the second predefined fault condition comprises the first computer system sending said status signal to the second computer system more than a predetermined number of times without receiving a response to the status signal from the second computer system.

8.   A computer program product for managing a transaction on a computer system, the computer program product including:

computer code for sending a request to access a conditionally-accessible piece of content to a remote computer system;

computer code for receiving a response from the remote computer system to the request;

computer code for sending a first acknowledgment to the response to the remote computer system;

computer code for automatically resending the first acknowledgment to the remote computer system if a second acknowledgment is not received from the remote computer system in response to the first acknowledgment and if a predefined condition is satisfied;

computer code for accepting a signal from the remote computer system and using information contained in the signal to modify the predefined condition;

a computer-readable medium for storing the computer codes.

9. A computer program product as in claim 8, in which the predefined condition comprises a predetermined amount of time elapsing from the time that the first acknowledgment was sent to the remote computer system.

10. A computer program product as in claim 8, in which the computer-readable medium is one of: CD-ROM, DVD, MINIDISC, floppy disk, tape, flash memory, RAM, ROM, system memory, hard drive, optical storage, and a data signal embodied in a carrier wave.

11. A method for managing the transmission of transactional audit records from a first computer system to a clearinghouse, the method including:

maintaining a first count of the number of audit records accumulated at the first computer system;

accumulating a predefined number of audit records at the first computer system;

generating an audit record at the first computer system;

incrementing the first count;

comparing the first count with a first predefined threshold value;

transmitting at least the predefined number of audit records to the clearinghouse;

receiving a first acknowledgment from the clearinghouse;

decrementing the first count.

12.   A method as in claim 11, further including:

        maintaining a second count of the value of unpaid receipts from one or more transactions conducted at the first computer system, the unpaid receipts forming part of said audit records;

        receiving a second acknowledgment from the clearinghouse;

        decrementing the second count in response to the second acknowledgment.

13.   A method as in claim 11, further including:

        receiving a signal from the clearinghouse, the signal including a time indicator;

        at a time specified by said time indicator, sending a request to the clearinghouse to transmit one or more acknowledgments relating to audit records.

14.   A computer program product for managing the transmission of transactional audit records from a first computer system to a clearinghouse, the computer program product including:

        computer code for maintaining a first count of the number of audit records accumulated at the first computer system;

        computer code for generating an audit record at the first computer system;

        computer code for incrementing the first count;

        computer code for comparing the first count with a first predefined threshold value;

        computer code for transmitting audit records to the clearinghouse;

        computer code for receiving a first acknowledgment from the clearinghouse;

computer code for decrementing the first count in response to the first acknowledgment; and

a computer-readable medium for storing the computer codes.

15. A computer program product as in claim 14, further including:

computer code for maintaining a second count of the value of unpaid receipts from one or more transactions conducted at the first computer system, the unpaid receipts forming part of said audit records;

computer code for receiving a second acknowledgment from the clearinghouse;

computer code for decrementing the second count in response to the second acknowledgment.

16. A computer program product as in claim 14, further including:

computer code for receiving a signal from the clearinghouse, the signal including a time indicator;

computer code for sending a request to the clearinghouse to transmit one or more acknowledgments relating to audit records at a time specified by said time indicator.